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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to view more clearly the literature on altruism as differentiated by sex, the paper suggests consideration of more basic characteristics of male and female behavior in terms of past learning and present expectations, rather than solely in terms of society's general set of normative beliefs about the behaviors which are appropriate for men and women. Although sex-related regularities may be used as guidelines for initial predictions of behavior, the author emphasizes further examination of situational characteristics which may or may not elicit the expected normative behavior. Two categories of literature on helping behavior are reviewed: direct intervention studies and response to a direct request studies. The results of the author's own study of differentiated male-female behavior are also presented. These indicate that simplification of research on helping behavior differentiated by sex in order to gain predictability could be followed by more complex studies in which a variety of situational variables can be explored. (Author/SES)

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SEX AND HELPING: EXPECTATIONS AND ATTRIBUTIONS

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Let us assume, for the purpose of this discussion, that our society, or any society, has a general set of beliefs about the behaviors which are appropriate for men and women to perform. Clearly this belief system is subject to alteration, as we are witnessing in the U.S. today. Nevertheless, at any given period of time, a reasonably high consensus may exist. Rather than simply labeling such a normative system, we might further question the basis of its establishment and continued functioning, and at such a point it is probably appropriate to invoke notions of learning, past reinforcement, and anticipated rewards and costs. It would seem to me that a majority of the literature on helping behavior can be more clearly viewed if we consider more basic characteristics of male and female behavior, both in terms of past learning and in terms of present expectations.

The problem seems to be not that there are normative beliefs, but rather that these norms are frequently used too loosely and hence lose their predictive value. Within a social learning sense, such as that proposed by Mischel, it is imperative to consider situation specific characteristics of behavior rather than assume that there are general predictive personality characteristics or even norms. One of the causes for such disarray within the research on altruism as it concerns sex differences seems to be this assumption that sex differences should always be in the same direction, and if not, then neither norms nor data make sense.

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General Literature on Sex Differences

In reviewing the more general literature on sex differences per se, certain general tendencies can be found. Males more often display agression, self-reliance, instrumental competence; females more often display dependence and anxiety. Such differences have been observed both in behavioral tests and in personality measures (Kagan & Moss, 1962; Maccoby, 1966; Barry, Bacon & Child, 1957); furthermore, their existence is acknowledged by observers who are asked to characterize the behavior of males and females. In nearly every society, for example, males are viewed as active and females as more passive (e.g., Triandis & Osgood, 1958). Sheriffs and McKee (1957) have reported that subjects of both sexes see men as more effective in dealing with the environment and more competent. At a slightly different level, Horner (1968) has reported that far more women than men can be classified as being high on a motive to avoid success, as an additional construct in the need achievement literature, while Makosky (1972) has reported that females who are high on a motive to avoid success are less likely to perform on a masculine-defined task.

While many of these dimensions may be more often found than not, there are clearly exceptions to each, and in general these exceptions can be attributed to specific situational variations. Such has been the perennial problem of reliance of fixed personality traits, and consideration of sex differences in altruism should not be guilty of the same over-reliance on a variable concept.

What I would suggest is that we use evidence of sex-related regularities as guidelines for initial predictions, coupled with a consideration of situational characteristics which may or may not elicit such characteristics.

Two Categories of Altruism

If we break down the studies of helping behavior into two general

categories -- direct intervention vs. response to a direct request -- it may be possible to observe somewhat more consistent trends in the helping behavior literature as it relates to sex differences.

Intervention studies. Intervention studies are the type in which the subject is witness to an event, and in which the observer must in turn decide to take some action or not. In this type there is no direct request. These do not have to be emergencies, however -- any situation in which no direct request is made of the S is included in the present category. Examples of this type are the Piliavin subway study, Bryan and Test's flat tires and a variety of others. As Latané and Darley (1970) have pointed out, intervention in these instances can be of two kinds -- direct or reportorial. While Latané would hesitate to use normative explanations, he and Darley do point out that the male is more likely to intervene in situations requiring physical strength. Our reference to other literature on sex differences would lead us to predict that in any situation requiring physical strength, the male would be more likely to offer help than would the female. Such a tendency should be strengthened in a situation in which the person in need of help is female, as such a situation should increase the salience of strong-weak, active-passive, and self-reliant vs. dependent norms. Such a prediction is clearly supported by the Piliavin et al., and by the Bryan and Test tire study.

For studies in which intervention of a non-physical nature is required, e.g. reportorial situations, we should expect less clear-cut difference between males and females, unless specific situational characteristics of a situation which are sex-related, and in general the best prediction might be no difference between the sexes. On the other hand, certain situations might have characteristics (which could be determined by normative sample ratings) which are clearly related more closely to females

than males. If an intervention situation, for example, required helping behavior to assist a lost or crying child, one might predict that more females than males would offer this type of intervention. (It is of some interest that these more female-related situations have been selected with extreme rarity, as opposed to male-related situations of changing tires and assisting crippled or drunk males on a subway.) As a general tendency, however, the observed tendency of males to be more self-reliant and assertive would lead to the prediction that more males than females would engage in either type of intervention behavior.

As a matter of fact, the data available is rather obliging. In the series of studies of this intervention type, it is interesting to note that there are no reported reversals, i.e. instances of women helping more than men -- the data either points to greater helping on the part of males, or in a few instances no significant difference between the two sexes.

Examples of confirmation in situations requiring assertion, but no great physical strength, include the following: Latané, for example, has reported that males are more likely than females to pick up dropped pencils and books, with this tendency stronger in the South than in the North or West. Similar data has been found in our work at Purdue. Males are also more likely to stop to pick up hitchhikers, a situation which potentially but not necessarily could involve some danger (Deaux, unpublished data). Gelfand (1972) has reported that males were more likely than females to report a shoplifting, although Latané and Darley (1970) found no difference in similar behavior. In a recent study by Page and Moss (1972, in press), males showed a non-significant tendency to help a pedestrian with a dropped parcel in a control condition; in that and in other conditions they found no difference between the total amount of help offered by males and females, but did find that males offered more physical help, i.e.

actually picking up the parcel, while females limited themselves to verbal or reportorial help. Again, in partial support, Wispé and Freshley (1971) found that males were more likely to offer direct help to the person who dropped shopping bag, although the differences were primarily limited to the black subject sample. Cases in which absolutely no differences between the sexes were found are in fact fairly infrequent, including for example Latané and Darley's (1970) experiments with subway instructions.

Response to request studies. In contrast to the preceding situations in which the subject must take initiative are the situations in which the individual is directly confronted with a request. To my knowledge, there are no clear-cut findings which suggest that males or females are more likely to agree to help with a direct request (even persuasability studies, once considered to point exclusively to the greater conformity of females, have recently been questioned by the findings of Sistrunk and McDavid, 1971), and it is in this category of helping behavior that we find the widest variation in terms of male and female differences. In some cases, males have been shown to offer more help than females -- Latané and Darley's (1970) request for 20¢, Gaertner and Bickman's (1971) phone calls to ask S to make another call (to a garage); in other case, no difference was found -- Bickman's data, presented at this symposium; Emswiller, Deaux, and Willit's (1971) request for a dime; and in still other cases, females were found to offer more help than males -- Thalhofer's (1971) measure of help towards a disturbed child, Fischer's (1971) study with volunteering for work in mental hospitals, and a recent unpublished study by Page and Barnes, in which post cards were left in a subject's windshield.

While any post hoc categorization of such studies is risky at best, and useless at worst, I would nevertheless like to suggest two factors which would seem to be operative in many of these studies. One of these resembles the ingratiation hypothesis which Len Bickman has suggested.

Instead of the more complicated ingratiation notion, however, I would simply suggest that cross sex-interaction can be more reinforcing in many situations than same-sex interaction. While such a notion would seem quite obvious to the more romantically inclined, there is a surprisingly limited amount of data to support it. A small amount of data from Byrne's research program, and in particular a study currently in process by Fran Cherry, does suggest that evaluation from an opposite-sex person is more powerful than the same sex person. In somewhat similar fashion, Phil Brickman has data to show that individuals prefer to work with an opposite sexed partner on a cooperative task. On this admittedly flimsy data, we might suggest that an individual is more likely to agree to help an opposite-sexed individual. Bickman's data clearly demonstrates this finding, and Latané and Darley's study in which the experimenter asked for directions from a naive subject are also partially supportive. In the Emswiller et al study (1971) the sex interaction approached significance. ($p < .10$)

A second characteristic of the direct request situation which would seem important is the situational aspects mentioned earlier. Again, we unfortunately have to rely on primarily assumption, although it is clearly possible to obtain scaled ratings from a sample group to determine which behaviors are considered sex-linked. We have, incidentally, made a beginning at this kind of thing, but because our initial interest was in areas other than altruism, relatively few of our scaled situations are relevant to the present situation. (It can be noted, however, that behaviors such as changing a tire, á la Bryan and Test, are not only perceived as masculine oriented, but are also negatively evaluated for a female performer, thus suggesting the attributions which might result if a woman chose to help in this way.) It seems clear that situational weighting factors would prove relevant to future studies of helping behavior.

In lieu of such norms, we can nevertheless consider the situations in which one or the other sex showed greater amounts of helping behavior. In the Gaertner and Bickman study, more males than females responded to a plea to make a phone call to a garage. It is possible to argue that this is a more masculine situation: an obvious test would be to conduct a parallel situation in which calls were made to a nursery and to a garage. In similar fashion, we might suggest that volunteering to work in a mental hospital and helping a disturbed child are also more female-oriented, appealing to nurturant characteristics which are more characteristic of the female according to a variety of measures (cf. Maccoby, 1966).

To determine whether such situational characteristics can be relevant to the display of helping behavior, we recently conducted a study which I would like to present in some detail today.

The basic procedure was for either males or females to make random phone calls, which were in turn answered by either male or female respondents. The experimenter-callers then asked the respondent for assistance on a book that the caller was presumably attempting to write, dealing with either mechanics or cooking. Help in this instance consisted of answering a series of brief questions about the topic, although the measure of help was simply the respondent's agreement or refusal to answer the questions. Thus we had a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design, with sex of caller, sex of respondent and sex of task varied. According to the situational analysis presented above, we would expect the greatest amount of help to be shown in those instances in which all factors were role-consistent, e.g. a female being asked by another female about cooking, or, conversely, a male being asked by another male about mechanics. Less help should be shown in each of those instances in which at least one element was deviant from role expectancies. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, these predictions were generally

supported. Looking first at the percentages in each cell (Table 1), it can be seen that the greatest help was given in those two cells in which all factors were consistent: when males were asked about mechanics information by a male caller, the response was 100%; similarly when females were asked by females about cooking, the response was 90%. In each of the other cells the percentage is somewhat less. Conducting an analysis of variance for chi-square data revealed that the predicted three-way interaction was significant ($p = .01$). Also significant at the .05 level was the task x experimenter interaction, suggesting that role deviation on the part of the help-seeker is a greater influence than on the part of the help-giver, who after all did not voluntarily put him or herself in the situation. Referring again to the percentages, it can be seen that the major cause of this significant interaction is the difference between males and female experimenters making out of role requests. While males asking about cookbooks have a reasonably high degree of success, females asking about mechanics books do not fare as well. This finding suggests that perhaps the arbitrarily chosen topics were not equally polarized, and a subsequent scaling of these situations revelaed that such was indeed the case.

As a subsidiary note of some interest, I might note that the results presented are based on a randomly selected sample of residents of Lafayette, Indiana. When a replication of this study was conducted using solely a student population, the results were quite different: in this case, callers received nearly 100% cooperation in all conditions, suggesting both a ceiling effect on cooperation as well as a lack of salience of role definitions in the student culture. Such evidence indeed suggests that the nature of role expectations is changing in the contemporary society.

While this study is after all only a single study, I think it points to a direction which altruism research might profitably follow. Analysis of

situations into only three categories as a rudimentary beginning -- primarily masculine, primarily feminine, and equally masculine or feminine -- would allow us some predictability as to the expected sex differences in helping behavior. More research would hopefully then allow us to make finer distinctions and perhaps ultimately lead to situational weighting components which would sharpen our predictive abilities in this heretofore varied area. Further, given more thorough knowledge of helping behavior in a variety of situations, we can begin to look more carefully at the consequences of deviating from expected role performance, particularly in terms of the attributions made of the performer and the rewards or lack of rewards which follow from such deviations. Research in this area would clearly offer both more understanding of altruism as well as a valuable perspective on the ways in which males and females are differentially responded to in the society.

Table 1: Percentages of Help Offered

	Mechanics Book		Cook Book	
	Male E	Female E	Male E	Female E
Male S	100% (9)	46% (13)	71% (17)	67% (6)
Female S	72% (18)	58% (12)	80% (20)	90% (10)

Note: Number of Ss per cell in parentheses

Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis (Non-parametric ANOVA)

Source	p
Task	.25
Sex of E	.10
Sex of S	.50
Task x E	.04
Task x S	.61
E x S	.15
Task x S s E	.01